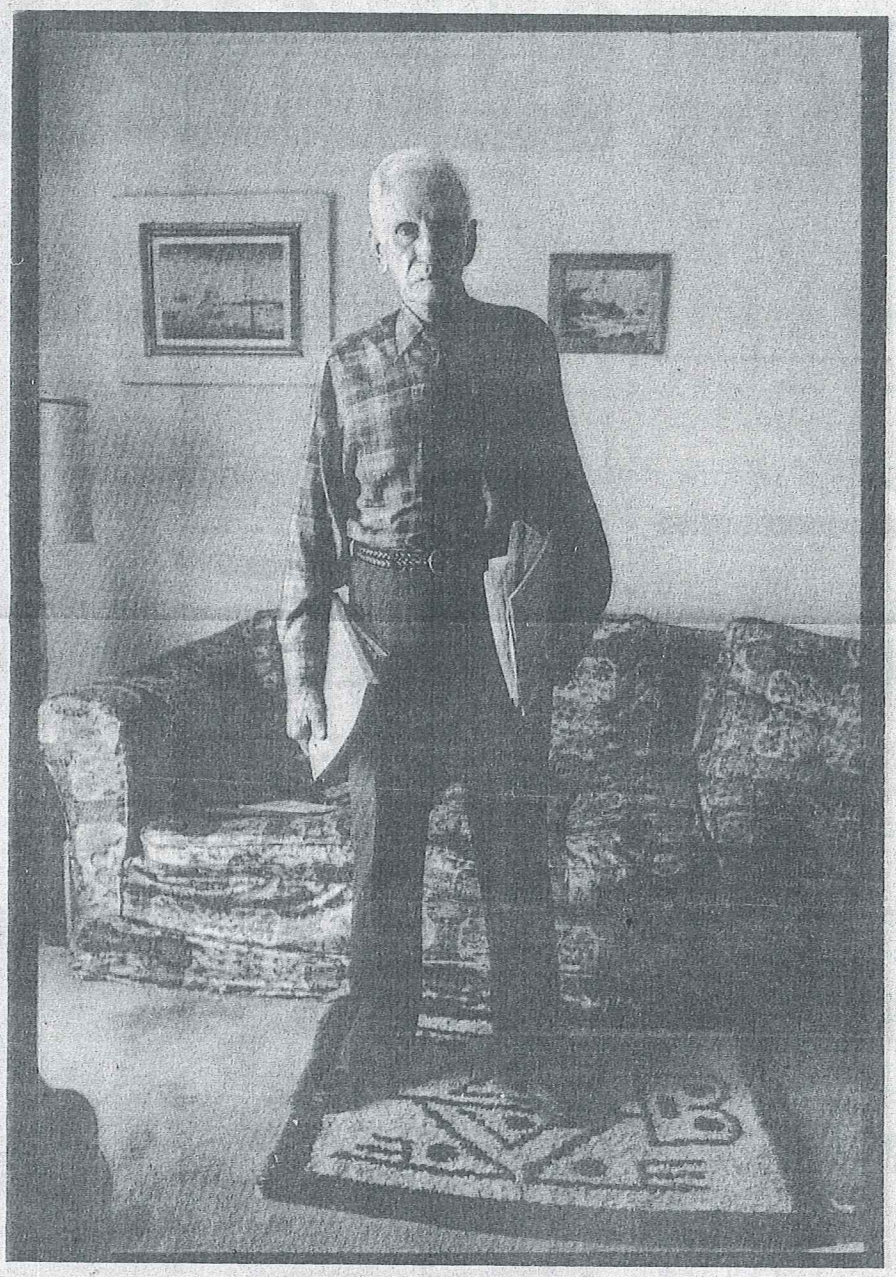
Casco Bay Weekly

A conversation with Allan Witwer



"When Kennedy was shot, I was contacted by *Life* magazine. They gave me a $10,000 advance.... Hoover found out, and got the IRS to put [*Life* owners] Claire Booth Luce and Henry Luce in jail for income tax evasion. Over the years, I've had probably $100,000 in advance money, but the FBI always came out to see [the potential publishers] about something."

Allan Witwer, 81, of South Portland is a former screenwriter, a former theatrical agent, a former contractor on a top-secret defense project during World War II and the former manager of an exclusive resort, the Hotel Del Charro in La Jolla, Calif. In the 1960s, he witnessed curious events at the hotel that launched Witwer on a lifelong crusade.

What did you see?

One morning at breakfast time, I looked out at the pool... and here was Carlos Marcello, the Mafia boss, having breakfast with [FBI director] J. Edgar Hoover. [The hotel's owner, oil man Clint] Murchison used Hoover. When Murchison wanted to make a deal with somebody, he'd invite them to the hotel, and he'd make sure they sat near Hoover. Hoover would have something on them. And they made their deal or else Hoover would move in on them. [Hoover] didn't pay any bills. I've got $54,000 worth of his hotel bills.

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I heard [Democratic presidential candidate John] Kennedy was coming to La Jolla on his campaign, and I wanted to invite him to the hotel as our guest. His father had once produced a movie of some of my father's short stories. So I went over to Murchison's bungalow, and he was sitting there with Hoover, [FBI deputy director] Clyde Tolson and Marcello. Kennedy had just announced that if he was elected he was going to retire Hoover and end the oil depletion allowance.

I asked Murchison if we could invite Kennedy. He blew up, and so did Tolson and Hoover. "Shit, no, we can't have that son of a bitch here," [Murchison] said. "And he better never come to Dallas." And Hoover said, "We've got enough on him. He better come to Dallas sometime."

Do you really think there was a connection between those remarks and Kennedy's assassination?

Murchison owned the school book depository where [Lee Harvey] Oswald was [when he shot Kennedy], and Oswald had come to the hotel about a month before to see Hoover and Murchison.

Do you have any evidence?

I have hard-core documents that I keep in a safe place away from here. I've been harassed by the FBI for more than 30 years. It's a bad thing to be the man who knew too much.

By Al Diamon; photo by Tonee Harbert